

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 160

June 19, 1996, 9:23 a.m.
Page S-6424 Temp. Record

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION/National Missile Defense Cut

SUBJECT: National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1997 . . . S. 1745. Dorgan amendment No. 4048.

ACTION: AMENDMENT REJECTED, 44-53

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 1745, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1997, will authorize a total of \$267.3 billion in budget authority for national defense programs (the President requested \$254.3 billion). In real terms, this bill will authorize \$5.6 billion less, and the President requested \$18.6 billion less, than was provided in fiscal year (FY) 1996.

The Dorgan amendment would reduce the authorization for fiscal year 1997 for national missile defense (NMD) research and development by \$300 million, to \$508,437,000, which is the level requested by the Clinton Administration. The Clinton Administration's stated policy is to continue research and development funding at a level sufficient to keep open the possibility of deploying an NMD system by 2003. The \$800 million funding level provided by this resolution is equal to the amount that former Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO) Director O'Neil (who just resigned) testified before Congress would be necessary this year to preserve the 2003 deployment option. Further, the level is consistent with the Administration's Bottom-Up Review of the amount of funding that would be necessary. The Joint Requirements Oversight Council recommended a \$500 million authorization based on the "current and projected ballistic missile threat."

Those favoring the amendment contended:

The \$300 million increase that this bill will make to the Administration's request for NMD research and development is not simply for research and development--it is intended as the first downpayment on the actual deployment of an NMD system by 2003. We are strongly opposed to that intent. Just two weeks ago we managed to defeat an attempt to invoke cloture on the Defend America Act (see vote No. 157). That Act would have committed the United States to deploying an NMD system by 2003. Though this bill will not officially commit the United States to deploying by 2003, it will proceed as though that commitment had been made. For all the reasons we opposed making the deployment of an NMD system our official policy, we oppose making it our de facto policy.

(See other side)

YEAS (44)			NAYS (53)			NOT VOTING (3)	
Republicans (4 or 8%)	Democrats (40 or 91%)		Republicans (49 or 92%)	Democrats (4 or 9%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (3)
Gregg	Akaka	Johnston	Abraham	Helms	Heflin		Bradley- ^{2AY}
Hatfield	Baucus	Kennedy	Ashcroft	Hutchison	Inouye		Bumpers- ^{2AY}
Jeffords	Biden	Kerrey	Bennett	Inhofe	Lieberman		Pryor- ²
Kassebaum	Bingaman	Kerry	Bond	Kempthorne	Nunn		
	Boxer	Kohl	Brown	Kyl			
	Breaux	Lautenberg	Burns	Lott			
	Bryan	Leahy	Campbell	Lugar			
	Byrd	Levin	Chafee	Mack			
	Conrad	Mikulski	Coats	McCain			
	Daschle	Moseley-Braun	Cochran	McConnell			
	Dodd	Moynihan	Cohen	Murkowski			
	Dorgan	Murray	Coverdell	Nickles			
	Exon	Pell	Craig	Pressler			
	Feingold	Reid	D'Amato	Roth			
	Feinstein	Robb	DeWine	Santorum			
	Ford	Rockefeller	Domenici	Shelby			
	Glenn	Sarbanes	Faircloth	Simpson			
	Graham	Simon	Frahm	Smith			
	Harkin	Wellstone	Frist	Snowe			
	Hollings	Wyden	Gorton	Specter			
			Gramm	Stevens			
			Grams	Thomas			
			Grassley	Thompson			
			Hatch	Thurmond			
				Warner			

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

No threat exists to justify the expense of following that course. We should only provide the amount of money needed to continue research and development efforts. According to the Joint Requirements Oversight Council, which is comprised of the Vice Chiefs of Staff, not Administration officials, that amount of money is \$500 million per year. The Vice Chiefs agree with us that we should only provide that amount of funding. We urge our colleagues to respect their judgment, and to join us in approving the Dorgan amendment.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

Two weeks ago we debated a bill to commit the United States to deploying an NMD system by 2003. Though a majority of Senators favored deployment, a determined filibuster by Senators in opposition managed to kill that bill (see vote No. 157). Those Senators, at the time, said that they agreed with the Clinton Administration's stated policy that no such commitment should be made, but the option of deploying by that date should be kept open. Now they have offered an amendment to reduce this bill's funding for NMD research and development to the level requested by the Clinton Administration. Though one might assume that this level of funding must therefore be enough to keep open the option of deploying a system by 2003, one would be wrong. President Clinton requested only \$500 million for FY 1997, which is not nearly enough funding. His outgoing Director of the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization has consistently stated that a level of \$800 million in spending this year would be needed to begin building a system that would be in place by 2003, and his Bottom-Up Review of all defense needs found that a similar amount would be required.

Last year President Clinton vetoed the Defense Authorization bill largely because it would have required an NMD system to be fully operational by 2003. With fine political instincts, he realized that the voters might not approve of him vetoing a bill that would have given them the protection from ballistic missile attacks that they are now totally lacking, so he came up with his "3 plus 3" plan. Under that plan, he says that all the necessary preliminary steps that would need to be taken in the next 3 years to have a system built by 2003 will be taken, and then the decision will be made in the second 3 years as to whether the system actually will be fielded.

Typically, though, President Clinton's actions have not matched his rhetoric. He has requested such a low funding level that it not only will be impossible to meet the 2003 goal, it will also drive numerous companies out of the field that have the technological expertise that is needed to build the system. We believe this action is deliberate. President Clinton, and many congressional Democrats, have no intention of following their 3 plus 3 plan. They do not want to build an NMD system by 2003 or ever. They only made their proposal for political cover.

We will not allow them to back away from their plan. The danger to the United States from accidental, unauthorized, and deliberate small-scale ballistic missile assaults is great and it is growing. For instance, we know of a few incidents many years ago involving drunken missile operators in the former Soviet Union. Nothing came of those incidents because the Soviets had very tight control over nuclear launches. That same control does not exist today in Russia. Also, we know of recent incidents of criminals being arrested in Western Europe with weapons-grade nuclear materials that came from the former Soviet Union, we know that approximately 30 countries have or are seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction and the ballistic missiles to deliver them, we know that North Korea, within 3 years and maybe sooner, will be able to hit Alaska and Hawaii with missiles that it is building on its own, and we know that missile technology can and has been bought by regimes that are extremely hostile to the United States.

The sponsor of this amendment assures us that anyone who wanted to attack the United States with a weapon of mass destruction would smuggle it into the country to escape detection. We have in place numerous means of stopping such efforts. We have no defense against ballistic missiles. Further, the sponsor of this amendment should reexamine his placid assumption that no one would ever dare fire a missile against the United States for fear of massive retaliation. He assures us that "should any country, any rogue nation, any adversary be foolish enough to launch a missile with a warhead against this country, that country will cease to exist quickly." Really? If one drunken Russian fires a missile that obliterates New York City, the U.S. automatic response will be to murder everyone in Russia with a massive nuclear assault? Even if it is the leader of a country, such as Libyan leader Qadhafi, who has said he would destroy Washington, D.C if he had nuclear missiles, would the United States respond with massive retaliation? Would the possibility or even assurance of that response be enough to dissuade him?

The Congressional Budget Office has said if every bell and whistle were bought, it might cost as much as \$60 billion to build an NMD, but that realistically it expected it to cost only between \$10 billion and \$15 billion over the next 15 years. Cheaper systems yet could be built--the sponsor of the amendment has admitted during this debate that one proposed system that could provide the entire United States reasonable assurance of protection against a single missile could be built for only \$2 billion.

Whether the cost is \$60 billion over 15 years or \$2 billion, we think we should build an NMD system. Though we were not able to get our colleagues to drop their filibuster of a requirement to build an NMD system by 2003, we will not back away from our determination that they at least keep their promise to keep that option open. We therefore strongly oppose the Dorgan amendment.